

[chatter and carnival music]

ANNABELLE: The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition.

KARL: The what?

ANNABELLE: The forgotten World’s Fair in 1909.

KARL: There was a second World’s Fair?

ANNABELLE: Well technically, this one was the first.

[intro music plays]

Voice 1: Seattle is...

Voice 2: Well, we don’t use umbrellas.

Voice 3: Coffee. Computers?

Voice 1: It’s a city with a needle.

Voice 2: Home to Sasquatch!

Voice 4: Home to the Museum of History and Industry.

Voice 2: Innovation.

Voice 1: Rain!

Voice 5: A story. A history.

[intro music finishes]

ANNABELLE: I’m Annabelle.

KARL: And I’m Karl . We’re youth advisors at the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle.

ANNABELLE: And this is Rainy Day History, a podcast by the MOHAI Youth Advisors that explores inclusion, exclusion, objects, people, and how the Seattle we know—

KARL: — the questions we grapple with now about what it means to be a Seattleite

ANNABELLE: — are all part of a bigger story.

KARL: This season we’re taking a closer look at the physical and intangible marks aspirations of growth have left on the city, and the way periods of growth have impacted Seattle communities differently.

ANNABELLE: This season was also recorded from our homes via the wonderful internet during the coronavirus pandemic.

KARL: Stay safe, stay healthy, stay at home, and enjoy the show whether it’s raining outside or not.

[rain sounds]

ANNABELLE: So today we are talking about the Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition, more commonly known as the AYP.

KARL: Yup! Wait, what exactly is the AYP?

ANNABELLE: It was the World’s Fair in 1909. Hosted in Seattle, it helped publicize development in the Pacific Northwest.

KARL: It was originally meant to be hosted in 1907 as a 10th anniversary of the Klondike Gold Rush. However, there was a 300th anniversary celebration already planned in Jamestown, Virginia the same year, so the organizers postponed the fair for 2 years to make sure it would live up to expectations.

ANNABELLE: What were those expectations?

KARL: Well, a World’s Fair, or Expo, is a massive international fair designed specifically to showcase achievements and cultural traditions from around the world with exhibits, performances, spectacles, and more. Traditionally, large structures that remain in the city permanently are designed and built specifically for the Expo.

ANNABELLE: AYP was built on the ground that makes up the University of Washington today, and you can still see the influences that AYP had on the campus with structures such as the Rainier Vista and the Drumheller Fountain.

KARL: Since AYP, the UW campus has grown from 240 acres to almost 650 today.

ANNABELLE: Pretty big, right? You don’t need to be on the UW campus to see what AYP brought to Seattle, either. Many additional miles of streetcar tracks, a statue of William Seward, and fire alarm boxes were all added to Seattle, permanently.

KARL: Many skilled craftspeople contributed to making sure AYP was a success, the most famous of them being the Olmsted brothers, designers of New York’s Central Park and many of Seattle’s beloved parks. Their firm oversaw the landscaping of the fairgrounds. AYP brought unprecedented amounts of people to Seattle. In the early 1900s, Seattle’s population was less than a quarter of a million people, but in just 4 months, 4 million people came to the fair.

ANNABELLE: It cost a lot of money, too, almost 10 million dollars. But for how much money AYP cost, it raised a lot, too. The booster raised \$1 million in just one day.

KARL: While AYP did go really well at the time, it was a brief but impressive event that has been mostly forgotten by many.

ANNABELLE: But, at least some permanent benefits came from AYP. A lot of people say that AYP was Seattle’s rite of passage into becoming a real city.

KARL: The fair was meant to capitalize on the popularity of the Yukon Gold Rush and cement Seattle as the gateway to Alaska, hence the Alaska-Yukon part of AYP. UW professor Edward Meany also thought that since the Pacific Rim could be a massive trade partner in the future as well, that it should be included, hence the Pacific, giving us Alaska-Yukon-Pacific.

ANNABELLE: A lot of places were represented at the fair. States created displays highlighting their natural resources, like thousands of nuts glued together to create an elephant for California, and the recent territory of Hawaii had a 30-foot high structure of coconuts and pineapples.

KARL: The Japanese Silk Association brought bales of silk for display. Several different buildings were dedicated to Washington industries and counties, including a Wenatchee Valley apple exhibit, and the Hoo-Hoo house (a place for lumbermen to relax and socialize with one another).

ANNABELLE: The Forestry Building, constructed from unprocessed logs felled in Chehalis (now Gray’s Harbor) County, remained after the fair and served as a forest and botanical museum. It also housed the Burke Museum, then known as the Washington State Museum, until 1931 when insects and the elements had finally taken their toll and the building was demolished.

KARL: The main attraction, however, was the Paystreak. The name was a reference to veins or layers of gravel from which a worthwhile, or paying, concentration of gold could be extracted.

ANNABELLE: It contained the vast majority of the attractions. Visitors could see camels, pet horses, participate in a Japanese tea ceremony, and if they wanted they could even pan for gold.

KARL: So how did AYP impact Seattle?

ANNABELLE: Despite the countless attractions as well as lots of cultural exposure, the fair organizers didn’t see the long-term impacts on Seattle they were hoping for.

KARL: They didn’t?!

ANNABELLE: Seattle was already in the midst of a population boom, and it’s hard to tell how much the fair really impacted it. Plus, most of the buildings were temporary, and although the fair made back the cost to develop it plus some more, it wasn’t a whole lot.

KARL: But the *preparations* for the fair contributed a lot to welcome the growth that was to come in Seattle. For example, miles of streetcar tracks, fire alarm boxes, and statues were installed. The main UW campus is laid out largely on the design of the fairgrounds. And the promotional materials and grandeur of the fair built an image of the city that was modern, bountiful, and exciting.

ANNABELLE: Many of the exhibits were meant to inspire awe and wonder, and many were meant to be sensational. On the Paystreak, which was purely for entertainment, this was even more so. Here visitors could watch questionable reenactments of historic events, taste foods from all around the world, play games, and buy souvenirs.

KARL: There were also displays of cultural traditions, including those from Indigenous cultures in territories the US had recently acquired. An Igorote Village showed traditional dances, dwellings, and daily activities of peoples from the Philippine island of Luzon; The “Eskimo Village” hosted canoe racing, had an igloo, and showcased Native artists at work.

ANNABELLE: The sensational nature of the displays was very visible in these cultural depictions. The Japanese, Filipino, and Native people who were hired for these displays were often willing participants, excited and proud to share their culture, and grateful for the economic opportunity the fair provided. However, just as many disliked the fair for not showcasing their cultures fairly.

KARL: In one specific instance, the Filipino people felt like they were an exhibit more than a people, showcased almost as if they were in a zoo. A letter, written 100 years after AYP demanded an apology for

the treatment, especially that, quote “Filipinos were made to eat dogs and act out indigenous practices for entertainment.” End quote.

ANNABELLE: It didn’t end there, either. Dr. Coll Thrush, a professor at the University of British Columbia, who specializes in indigenous history put it best, quote “Virtually every exhibit included some sort of ethnographic display, and the message was clear: these Indians were our people- not in the sense of being *us*, of course, but in the sense of being *ours*.” End quote.

KARL: Beyond the exhibits and attractions, there were many events hosted throughout the fair. Some, like a car race from New York to Seattle were meant to highlight recent technological innovations. Others, like a three-day long debate on prohibition, were more political in nature.

ANNABELLE: For example, suffragettes used AYP as a platform to help get their message out. They set up an exhibit at the fair, scheduled a Suffrage Day, and also commissioned an airship with the message “Votes for Women”. They successfully invited national women’s rights organizations and managed to gain even more press coverage for women’s rights. Just a year after the AYP, in 1910, women gained the right to vote in Washington state.

KARL: And now for our esteemed guest of the episode, Anne Jenner! Anne is the Pacific Northwest Curator at the UW Special Collections.

ANNABELLE: I interviewed Anne to learn more about AYP objects in their collection and to hear her insights on the fair and its legacy.

[jaunty piano music plays and fades out underneath]

ANNE: My name is Anne Jenner. As Pacific Northwest curator at the UW Lib Special collections I help build the archival and library collection that’s used by researchers who visit us in the lower level of the libraries. I help in bring in collections that tell the story of the history culture and people of the pacific northwest.

ANNABELLE: We have looked at some of the items in your collections and we noticed that the AYP was a large part and there were many different items from that and we were just wondering what sort of items are in the collection related to that that you could describe.

ANNE: Oh yeah that’s great yeah, the AYP is really special for the University of Washington. I was surprised that we didn’t have *more* records than we do about the fair. In their flurry of running a fair, then dismantling it, and moving on with their lives, they didn’t take time to actually make sure that the record was preserved in a repository, in an archive. So curators, and archivists, and librarians, and historians have had to - for the past 110 years - pull together collections as they could and pull together records where they could find them in order to tell the story.

As you know the campus plan was designed with this sort of giant fair in mind. So, I like to think of the most special artifacts that we have from the AYP as being architectural features on the campus itself. For example, Drumheller Fountain (which wasn’t named Drumheller Fountain until the 1960s, it was called the Geyser Basin) was designed as a water feature right smack dab in the middle of the grounds, the fairgrounds for the AYP.

The George Washington statue which is *huge* and on the edge of Red Square on 15th right at Campus Parkway, right by the Henry Art Museum, was erected for the fair as well. One of the most prominent things “in our collection” (I put that with air quotes around it) in our collection is the campus itself. But we have some really interesting small items from the fair from the exposition including you know, ribbons that were given out to people who went out for a particular reason for example there were theme days you

know, like different ethnic groups, you know there was a Swedish day there was a music day there were days for people who were members of different organizations. They would wear these sort of silk ribbons with printing on them and obviously people kept them they were keepsakes, they were mementos from that day. It was considered a really special occasion. People dressed to the nines; they were dressed in the fanciest dress. This was you know, an occasion, a very special occasion to go, and so you see that by some of the things that have been saved. We have other mementos like small spoons with the logo of the exposition on it, and it says AYP 1909, etc. One of the main things that we see commemorating the fair is this large bird’s eye map...

ANNABELLE: Yes. I’ve seen photographs of it, it looks really cool. And it’s interesting to look at it compared to the current UW campus and see how similar they were.

ANNE: Exactly! So, I learned a little bit about that map. It’s so cool, cause you could just look at it forever because there’s so many details in it. And you know it was hand-drawn, very idealized, a lot of tiny details in there (you can see some landscaping stuff) but it was drawn two years before the exposition opened. So it was designed as a aspirational view of what it would look like. So some of the buildings didn’t even get built. So that came out well before and I’m sure people in the area got to see it; you know, it was used as a promotional piece to help people plan when you know, that they really wanted to actually come to the fair.

One of these features was that there were these contests that you could enter. There was music written that was then performed by groups and individuals at events and performances, and there was art that was created, and there was this piece that we have that was create - its huge, 4, 5 feet wide by 3 or 4 feet high - and it is a replica of that bird’s eye view and it’s all done in *hair* – and the hair -

ANNABELLE: *Wow*

ANNE: (laughter) I know!

ANNABELLE: That’s crazy

ANNE: I’m sure you didn’t expect to hear that

ANNABELLE: No I didn’t, that’s crazy

ANNE: And the hair is situated in wisps and - to actually make all of the buildings, all of the trees, the fountain, the sky, the everything! It looks just like that bird’s eye view but it’s all made of hair.

ANNABELLE: Do you have any favorite AYP collection items aside from that or anything else that stood out to you?

ANNE: I think you know, our photograph collection...Frank Nowell - he was the official photographer. Not only did he come to photograph the exposition, but he had a giant staff. He had over 16 professional photographers who were working with him there. And they not only photographed all of the buildings, and the landscape, and the events, and the people, and they made it look as glamorous as it *was* - but also they documented...you know, *every* nook and cranny of this um, of the grounds. They also had little stands set up around the grounds where people could purchase the photos when they attended and they were taking photos of people as they visited too so you could get your picture taken you know with the camels for example on the pay streak. This body of photography is now part of our collection. I think MOHAI has *quite* a few as well. And I know that a lot of the Nowell photographs are in private collections as well. But the fact that we have over 900 of these photos really helps us preserve what the fair looked like, and how it was run, and how things were built. So that’s a really exciting collection that we have.

ANNABELLE: Yes. That sounds very exciting. I’ve looked at some of the photographs already and they’re amazing, and it’s so cool to see some of the different aspects, and it was obviously a very extravagant event

that they put on. And overall... what impression of the fair would somebody get from looking at these various items?

ANNE: Well, I think one of the perceptions the general public outside of Seattle was that Seattle was pretty backwoods - it was pretty rough, and they're out on the coast, and it wasn't very modern, or advanced, or sophisticated. And I think you know... they wanted to make a statement with this exposition that Seattle really was significant - it was thriving, it was modern, it had a lot of capital, so people had money, there was industry, there was commerce and business and it was very successful... and they really wanted to give that perception so they really raised the bar with the aesthetics. They wanted it all to *look* very high brow. And you get that from these pictures. I think that they felt like they had a...one shot to tell the world how good Seattle was, it was up and coming. And they also had the advantage of being the gateway to Alaska. People came to Alaska through Seattle and they wanted to show that we've moved beyond that, we're a little more sophisticated than just a stopping ground. And I think that they really did that. And I think that that is kind of a unique component of the AYP ... not only a gateway to Alaska but also to the Pacific Rim - so to Hawaii, and to the Philippines, and other Pacific Rim countries...

ANNABELLE: Right, right... and I think it's interesting... 'cause I was listening to you talk about that, and Seattle still is kind of a gateway to other places. And do you have any favorite exhibits that were at the AYP or are there any really interesting ones you can think of?

ANNE: One of the most peculiar exhibit features was the baby incubators. Tis was a way to demonstrate this practice of caring for babies and they did this at many different world's fairs and other exhibitions not just in Seattle. And there were actual live you know, living *babies* in need of medical care who got medical care at the fair in these baby incubators

ANNABELLE: Some of the exhibits were almost like performances, they were so obscure. Some of them were less of an exhibit like what we'd think of as an exhibit and more of like, an actual live show.

ANNE: Yeah there were these living exhibits for sure. It all seems very bizarre to us today, but this was the way people became exposed to new ideas. They got to see cutting edge technology and this is one example of that.

There were Native populations both from the United states or from the region, from the Coast Salish, as well as from Alaska, as well as from the Philippines, and from Hawaii who were represented in living exhibitions. And this is actually one of those legacies of the world's fair that is really uncomfortable for us to think about today. It was a curiosity for settlers and for new populations in the Pacific Northwest to learn about the Indigenous cultures, but not necessarily in a supportive way; this would be more in a paternal way. That this is an antiquated, or a culture that doesn't exist anymore, and it was very exotic. We know for a fact that they were not paid a lot of money to do this, and there was cruel treatment... but it was a very visible part of the AYP and very fascinating to visitors. And it wasn't just the AYP who would have exhibits like this it was a common thing at that time.

ANNABELLE: And so what did Seattleites think about this exposition? What was the impression on Seattleites?

ANNE: Extremely proud, and I'm sure that they planned for a long time; they were part of the planning, and they anticipated that they would be part of it - they would bring their, they would come with their families, they would host people from other parts of the country who would come and visit, and they would come with their organizations that they were part of, with their churches, with their ethnic groups... I'm sure they came many, many times.

People were *way* invested in this, and I think that they were very proud because it was a success. It made money, it did all of the things that the planners wanted it to do. It put Seattle on the map during that time, and helped people get a very favorable opinion about what the Pacific Northwest was.

ANNABELLE: What impact would you say it had on Seattle overall?

ANNE: It was huge - it modernized the city in so many ways. The university was moved from downtown to its campus, and became established, and grew exponentially. The population did boom, and the 19-teens were an era of progressiveness for Seattle. So much happened between the fair and the flu epidemic which came in 1917 and 1918. It was an amazing time in Seattle because the world's fair kicked off that transition from Seattle being sort of backwoods to being a sophisticated city.

ANNABELLE: That's all the questions we had for you, so I just want to say thank you so much for talking to us and answering our questions...

ANNE: Thank you Annabelle, it was enjoyable. I appreciated it.

[jaunty piano music fades in and plays out]

VANCE: Hi, I'm Vance and I'm the producer for this podcast episode. I'm going to be asking our hosts some questions about their thoughts regarding the AYP.

KARL: Hey Vance.

VANCE: Hello. Uh, so what was the most surprising or interesting thing you guys learned about AYP?

ANNABELLE: I learned a lot! I thought some of the most interesting things were how some of the exhibits were just so magnificent, and like, for example an army [of] wax figures that were bloody and just like, gory, and they were made out of wax and people would walk through and see them, so it was just pretty, pretty interesting how crazy some of the exhibits were.

KARL: Just wild, the scale and the content. I mean, they don't, they don't make exhibits like they used to.

VANCE: What do you guys think, if AYP was happening tomorrow, what would you want to go see?

KARL: Mm, just the buildings. The big architectural constructions that didn't last. I would love to go see them in the flesh, or in the plaster, rather, 'cause some of them were just, the scale, the design, is pretty impressive.

ANNABELLE: Yeah, definitely. I think I'd want to see how, and this probably sounds kind of dumb 'cause it's not necessarily part of the fair, but I'd want to see how people dressed 'cause I've read so much about how people, like, dressed up so much to go to this 'cause it was like the event of a lifetime and I'd love to just see, like, people's clothes, like, how they dressed, and -- Just like, I like that kind of thing (laughs)

KARL: The massive hats!

ANNABELLE: Yeah! The big hats and, like, full skirts and everything. It's just so cool to see, like different time periods of fashion and -- Yeah. And how different it is from today. And also of course, I'd love to see some of the exhibits and like, the reenactments probably would be pretty amusing to watch.

KARL: Getting to see what the people on the ground thought about American history in 1909.

ANNABELLE: Yeah. It's a long time ago!

VANCE: How do you think AYP affected Seattle now? Do you think it made a lasting impact?

KARL: Well, I mean, it certainly made Seattle more famous. I mean, four million people came to Seattle to go to the thing, so.

ANNABELLE: I think it also did a good job of actually establishing Seattle as a gateway to Alaska, ‘cause like even now when we think of going to Alaska you have to go through Seattle. Like even when I lived in California briefly -- we had to go through Seattle to get to Alaska. I mean, it’s definitely still been a gateway to both Canada and Alaska, and even like, Asia in some, some ways, ‘cause like, it’s just a straighter shot than from other states. So it’s interesting to see how that was definitely, I think, reinforced by the AYP.

VANCE: With all that in mind, do you guys think that it was worth it?

ANNABELLE: I think that it really depends on perspective because if somebody had gone to this fair they probably would have thought, “Wow, this is going to have a huge impact”. And maybe like looking at it from today we have, like, a different perspective than they do obviously ‘cause we live in a completely different time period. It’s all about which way you want to look at it. It’s all about, like, which perspective you want to take. ‘Cause you could say, yes, it was very influential. Many people came to Seattle. But you could also say, well, it didn’t have that big of a lasting impact. So, I think it really depends on what viewpoint you take regarding the fair, and how it’s changed our world. Or not.

KARL: It may not have been the most formative in Seattle’s history. Certainly not with the gold rush right before it and World War One right after it. It can have an impact without people being aware of it, a hundred years later, a hundred and ten years later. I think the thing is, it didn’t have as much of an impact as they *hoped*. It’s maybe it’s a little bit like *Waterworld*. I mean, that movie’s not really thought of as a success, simply because they spent so much money on it that despite the fact that they made back all of their money and made a profit, it’s not considered a success.

ANNABELLE: And I’ve never heard of it.

KARL: And you’ve never heard of it! Exactly.

VANCE: I’ve heard of it.

(laughter)

KARL: See? I mean it was a huge thing in 1990-whenever!

VANCE: That is quite the analogy.

(more laughter)

VANCE: Alright, (laughs) yeah, so why should listeners care about the World’s Fair? Or should they care?

ANNABELLE: I think, I mean, I think it’s always beneficial to learn something more about your history that you didn’t know. I think it’s always beneficial to learn something about, like, where you live. It’s always cool to find new facts about, like a different time that we might not be as educated on and I think it’s important also, um, to just educate people on the history of Washington ‘cause I think in schools that’s definitely a little bit neglected in some ways.

[ending theme music plays]

ANNABELLE: Thank you for listening to this episode of *Rainy Day History*. We hope you enjoyed what you learned.

KARL: To learn more, check out the show notes for research highlights and images of some of the things we mentioned in this episode. You can also visit the MOHAI website at mohai.org. That’s m-o-h-a-i-dot-o-r-g. You can follow us on Instagram at @mohaiteens and follow the museum at @mohaiseattle.

ANNABELLE: When we can safely re-open, come visit the museum in sunny South Lake Union, Seattle! Have a great day!

[jaunty piano music comes in and plays out underneath]

TK: Hello, this is TK - and I’m here with the credits! Stay tuned through the end for a sneak peek trivia question from India!

Thank you SO much to Anne Jenner for telling us more about the fair and its legacy.

The script was researched by India & Annabelle, written by Annabelle & Atul, and edited by India & Annabelle. This episode was produced by Annabelle & Vance and edited by Karl & Vance. Show notes and transcripts were built by Julia, Ziah, India, & Ethan. Marketing help came from Ziah.

This season was imagined by the 2020 MOHAI Youth Advisors. The podcast was developed by the 2019 MYA. Grace designed the logo, and Finch wrote the theme music and performed it along with Tyler and friend of the pod Sylvie Wang.

Thank you to all of our MOHAI staff cheerleaders, and special thanks for this season goes to Chris, Leonard, Sondra, Tori, and of course Emily T.

[8-bit elevator music starts playing and plays softly underneath]

INDIA: Hey! It’s your trivia master, India. Last time we asked: how often is the Drumheller Fountain on the UW campus drained for cleaning? And the answer was B: every other year. The Drumheller Fountain holds about a million gallons and is drained every other year. It takes about a week to drain fully and longer to clean. Facilities staff find many dropped items during maintenance, including cell phones, sunglasses, coins, and once even a mattress.

Here’s a bit of a preview of what’s coming up in the next episode: Which urban planning philosophy was Virgil Bogue particularly influenced by?

- a. Garden City Movement
- b. New Urbanism
- c. **City Beautiful Movement**
- d. Modernism

Find out the answer on the next episode of *Rainy Day History*!

[music fades out]